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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a model for preparation programs for educational leaders. The model portrays key program elements under three major headings: (1) pre-preparation concerns, (2) program issues and concerns, and (3) post-program concerns. Recruitment and selection are important pre-preparation concerns. The candidate's leadership experience, academic record, general knowledge, and professional knowledge must be considered. Program mission, course content, course sequence, teaching methods, clinical practice experiences, and exit standards are the salient program issues and concerns. Post-program concerns involve the department of educational administration in a continuing relationship with alumni, who would hopefully recommend new candidates, serve as field supervisors for internships and practica, and provide useful assessment and feedback so the department can improve its program. (JAM)

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TOWARD A MODEL FOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS FOR EDUCATION'S LEADERS

Paper Presented at Southern Regional Conference on Educational Administration (SRCEA)

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TOWARD A MODEL FOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS FOR EDUCATION'S LEADERS*

INTRODUCTION

Preparation programs for education administrators often are not "programs" at all; they are collections of courses taken by people interested in receiving certification in administration. Courses are often taken at the student's convenience, with little attention to program structure and sequence.

Additionally, few departments have requirements that people take pre-determined sequences or programs. If the department does have such a requirement, people often circumvent it and get certified at the state level. (Pitner, 1982; Peterson and Finn, 1985; Achilles, 1986).

One reason for lack of progress in developing sound programs based on research and theory has been the absence of a conceptual model to depict program elements and to guide both program development and evaluation processes. Based upon a longer paper prepared for the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEA), this paper outlines a construct or model depicting key elements of an administrator preparation program.

The model portrays key program elements under three major headings. Components within each major heading are described and expanded in detail. The three major headings are: (1) pre-preparation concerns, (2) program issues and concerns, (3) post-program concerns. This narrative briefly descirbes salient elements of each major heading.

PRE-PROGRAM CONCERNS

Pre-program concerns include the prior academic preparation and the individual commitment of each potential candidate. Steps for implementation include

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active recruitment/selection, and program admission (defined as institutional commitment).

Recruitment/Selection

[Achilles (1984) and others have warned that expanding job opportunities, especially for women and minorities, will reduce the pool of talented teachers, the traditional source of future administrators. Yet leadership in education requires talent, so departments must recruit candidates who possess the natural talent to lead. Self selected and casual drop-in students should give way to rigorous recruitment and selection of top candidates who display commitment to education leadership and who are invited into planned programs.]

Local districts should assist recruitment by nominating or recommending for advanced study those candidates who display the talent and potential for leadership. [Strong district recommendation should carry district commitment, perhaps a stipend while the individual is in training and sites for internship opportunities. Support for this type of commitment is found both inside the profession (e.g., Baltzell and Dentler, 1984) and outside it (Recommendation E, "Leadership and Federal Support"): A Nation at Risk (1983).

Preparation program faculties need to convince local administrators, boards of education, legislatures, state departments and education reformers about the importance of selecting and supporting top-quality candidates. A self-select, open-admissions system which absorbs anyone who can persevere denigrates education and the profession. Innovative and successful recruiting programs are a major first step for internal reform.]

Admission/Screening

One criticism leveled at departments of education administration is that they seldom refuse admission (and exit) to candidates (Peterson and Finn, 1985; Pitner, 1982). Candidates with interests in education leadership should be identified and recruited (invited?) and they should be screened on at least

three variables: 1) general knowledge, 2) education knowledge, and 3) administrative skill.

General Knowledge. [Many (Achilles, 1981 and 1986; Culbertson, 1973; Griffiths, 1964; Miklos, 1983) have argued the importance of general knowledge to an administrator. Complex social problems require a well educated group of education leaders (Culbertson, 1983). Indeed, much of the current reform movement includes recommendations for greater depth and breadth of knowledge among all educators.

Education Knowledge. Knowledge about education is important to education administrator success. This background forms a philosophical paradigm for each individual irrespective of the ability to articulate a particular philosophy (Griffiths, 1983).] Knowledge about education is part of the rite of passage to leadership in education and forms much of the common language that marks one as a member of the group or profession of education and education leadership.

[Administrative Skill. Some people display certain basic administrative skills and frequently surface as informal group leaders. They should be recommended to preparation programs by their administrators. People who possess some natural leadership ability will gain most from preparation. Some skill assessments (such as established by NASSP) measure skills which preparation programs may sharpen or teach. If the NASSP skills are the agreed upon skills (at present they are not), then a thoughtful pre-admission assessment of these skills may be the basis for individualized education plans that will help the students improve the required skills. The combination of pre-assessment for admission and appropriate individualized training is something a faculty should consider in program planning.]

PROGRAM ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Program issues are complex and numerous. They include program conceptualization, program content, instruction or program delivery, and a series of attendant variables such as: residency/full-time study, blocks of full-time study, cooperative work with the field, periodic and short-term refresher work, and cooperative endeavors with professional associations.

Paralleling the entire process from recruitment through exit is continuous and planned inquiry: research on program activities (Is this is a good program?) and research on education improvement -- research or evaluation of activities conducted by students and faculty as part of the program.

Program Conceptualization

[Programs should be programs, not merely collections of courses taken in seemingly random sequence (Achilles, 1986). Programs help students develop knowledge and skill in sequential fashion.] Programs should be designed within logical theoretic frameworks to allow for evaluations, measurement of change, and transportability through the processes of adoption and adaptation.

[Tremendous diversity exists in administrator preparation programs (Miklos, 1983; Silver and Spuck, 1978). Programs consist of M.A., Ed.S., Ed.D. or Ph.D. and/or certification requirements. Programs may be for full-time attendance, "distance" education, or part-time attendance. Increasing diversity to accommodate student needs and schemes to protect program enrollment ratios are tacit but important variables in program efforts.

Departments should define their missions carefully, e.g.: preparation of researchers or of practitioners. Differences exist in performance requirements among practitioners in various jobs such as superintendents, secondary school principals, private elementary school principals, etc. (Holland, 1981). Professors and public school administrators vary on the importance they place on

various practitioner skills (Coleman and Lanser, 1986). Program planners should consider what administrators need to know and/or what they do in the career fields for which programs are offered (Pitner, 1982). This determination forms the content philosophy of a particular program and offers unusual opportunities for cooperation between practitioners and higher education facilities.

Faculties and students should study what variables separate successful from less successful administrators. Program planners should ensure that the success variables are sequentially introduced into the curriculum (Miklos, 1983). Since the literature provides an array of research (sometimes with conflicting results) in this area, faculties need to extract the most important constructs for their own curricula. This difficult process allows considerable diversity among programs.

Program Content

Although the career options for responsible leadership in education dictate to a degree both the program content and the backgrounds and preparation individuals need, education administration has not progressed to a point where a commonly accepted set of understandings is required or recommended (Goldhammer, 1983). Professors, nevertheless, must profess something (Willower, 1983, p. 184). Some common areas of concern exist: e.g. finance, law, or school-community relations. Specific career preparation, such as for the principalship, suggests courses in the principalship, curriculum, and classroom supervision. Even so, content within courses may vary more widely than simply in the titles of courses (Goldhammer, 1983, p. 269).

Willower (1983) contends that academic inquiry (scholarship) and practice (pragmatism) determine course content. Professors actively engaged in serious inquiry or research learn subject matter by becoming familiar with the

literature and ferreting out common threads or constructs which explain to them much of the variance accounted for in practice. Prior experiences of professors as practitioners serve as valuable frames of reference in helping professors select program content.] Programs should contain academics -- the cognitive and background information a person needs to be a leader in education. Programs should help students develop and sharpen those skills that leaders need as they work to define and solve education problems. Finally, prospective administrators need supervised practice to sharpen their leadership. The supervised field experience -- clinical practice -- allows prospective administrators to practice without fear those concepts and skills learned in the preparation programs.

Instruction

[Instruction, the heart of education, is where people with ideas and words align themselves with people of desire and action. The interchange either sparks the imagination or dulls the spirit of both professor and student. Thus, regular evaluation of instruction is important. Peer and student evaluation should be part of continuing personal development. Departments should establish conceptually sound programs for instructional improvement and constantly monitor faculty instructional processes as one means of improving instruction.]

Instruction should attend to how people learn and change. Instruction is communication. Therefore, instruction should be built at least upon the twin theories of communication and change process. To accomodate the triad of academics, skills and clinical practice, instruction should consist of planned sequences of efforts 1) to lead students to understanding or conceptual control, 2) to help students learn and build the agreed-upon skills, and 3) to help students transfer those skills into practice. Instruction which does not attend to these considerations is inadequate. (Achilles; 1986, 1987).

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A strong program must address at least three levels of concern: the what, how, and why issues (Achilles, 1986). These elements (the key aspects and content of instruction, along with the processes of delivery) are mixed in different ways given the occupational aspirations of program participants (to become a practicing administrator in an educational setting or in a social setting other than education, or to become a professor/researcher). An administrator must know both what to do and how to do it. Most important, an administrator must know why a particular course of action is appropriate. Although the correspondence may not be exact, the three program elements suggest commonalities outlined in Figure 1. (Adapted from Achilles; 1986, 1987).

WHAT?	Specialty/ Specialist	Skills Training	Science	Research
HOW?	Expert/ Practitioner	Clinical Practice	Craft	Practice
WHY?	Liberal Arts/ Generalist	Academics	Art	Theory

Figure 1. Common Elements Supporting the Content/Instruction Nexus in Preparation Programs for the Professions (Different from Liberal Arts).

The entire program must be conceptualized within a structure that supports program purposes. This structure will include academic learnings, skill training and clinical practice delivered in experiences both on campus and off. Student participation will include some "residency" full-time study, some blocks of full-time study alternating with work, and periodic short-term "refresher" work. Responsibility for program elements will be shared with "the field" and professional associations.

Clinical Practice

Field-based experience for students has long been established at many institutions (Mikos, 1983). Candidates benefit from experiences which transfer theory into practice. First-hand experiences with the dynamics of administration are best done with a competent mentor such as a supervising administrator who, knowing both the department's goals and pertinent theories of administration, can help a protege or protegee understand the theory/practice interplay.

A department, therefore, could build a cadre of competent practitioners (or a group of field professors, or both) to work collaboratively with the faculty and interns to provide a common language, and orchestrate supervised practice for maximum benefit. All parties need to understand what is desired from field experiences. Mentoring is important to the initial success of students and needs to be thoughtfully rather than randomly developed both as part of preparation and for induction into the profession.

Exit Standards

[People completing courses in administration are seldom denied the right to graduate or to become certified (Achilles, 1986). The reason should be apparent. Faculty become committed to seeing people through; it is difficult to say "No" to someone who has persevered. However, someone needs to say "No" in certain instances. As a result, some states (e.g. Missouri, South Carolina) are establishing assessment centers to conduct assessments before people become certified. Likewise, California, Tennessee, Georgia, Missouri and other states have established academies to conduct required in-service education -- in some instances for people who have recently completed their certification courses.]

Education administrator preparation programs do not yet have recognized sets of evaluation tools for assessing the competence of their students. There

is a need for sound [methods of assessing student competence both in the classroom and in the field. This assessment process should be an important part of academic planning. Each department needs a system for measuring whether or not the skills to be taught were, indeed, taught.] This student assessment, based upon clear statements of exit standards, should also help each department assess the efficacy of its programs.

[Departments should assess themselves on at least two types of growth in their students: knowledge and skill. On the knowledge portion, the "Value Added" concept provides a novel approach (Coleman, 1985). The "Value Added" model uses a national assessment device such as the Advanced Test in Educational Administration and Supervision from the National Teacher Examination to test students at the point of entry and exit (graduation or certification) to determine the student knowledge base (Coleman and Richardson, 1987). Students not measuring up to the recognized and established standards should not be certified. A system of this sort could be used in conjunction with a skills assessment but needs to be carefully designed and validated.

Similarly, skills need to be assessed. The assessment center process is expensive and not universally accepted, but it is a beginning.] Until something better comes along...

Strict departmental control on recommendations, both for certification and employment, can help assure prospective employers that students have completed a program and met exit standards. Departmental recommendations should be reserved for only those who successfully complete planned programs. The departmental recommendation would be a statement of departmental assurance regarding each graduate's program completion, including field work and internships, etc.

This seemingly simple step is deceptively complex. It will require each department to make a statement regarding what that department believes about

departments have well defined, well evaluated, well conceptualized programs which they would offer as "ideals" when they enter into discussions about requirements and certification?

POST-PROGRAM CONCERNS

[A department's commitment to a student and a student's commitment to a department should grow with "commencement." The department has responsibility to help the new administrator become comfortable and skilled in administration (induction to the profession) and the graduate will reciprocate. The successful graduate should recommend new candidates, serve as a field supervisor for internships and practica, and provide useful assessment and feedback so the department can improve its program.] This entire area of post-program concerns is open to development. It will include patterned programs for inservice education and new cooperative efforts among higher education, "the field", and professional associations.

Conclusion

The model (see Figure 3) depicts the key elements described in this paper: Pre-program, program and past program elements that can be identified and defined for study and analysis. Without the development of a conceptual model such as this, preparation programs will continue to mark time in an athoretic vacuum. A model is necessary both to aid in conceptualization and development, and to help in the assessment of the efficacy of preparation programs. A conceptual framework such as shown in Figure 3 will illuminate important variables for study and help program planners understand relationships among the variables and between the program and administrator performance.

quality preparation programs, and about what that department will accept before issuing a recommendation. Since certification typically is in the hands of another agency (State), departments may need multifaceted structures to fulfill obligations to those already enrolled, or to continue to offer courses as a service to those who want administration courses but not certification. Only through evaluation and demonstrably superior results will departments be able to convince others of the benefits of planned programs. Figure 2 shows one possible configuration to accomodate the department recommendation concept and a department's need to offer some courses as a "service" to students and other departments.

	Certification	Various Degree Levels
Minimum program	Courses to meet minimums as required by certifying agency.	Certificate plus.... (Plan to abandon this option as soon as possible.)
Departmental endorsement (Ideal)	Planned program. Some residency. Field experience. Targeted writing activity.	Planned program. Extended residency. Guided and extanded field activities. Detailed writing experience. Pre/post assessments. Demonstrated areas of expertness
Service Courses offered as needed to non-majors; workshops for skill building; inservice for renewal and up-dating.		

Figure 2. Model showing differentiations in program quality and design.

Until departments preparing education administrators have defensibly outstanding preparation and ways to differentiate those who have completed the rigorous, planned programs from those who have only met minimum standards, external groups and agencies will continue to set program and certification requirements. External control undermines professionalism. But how many

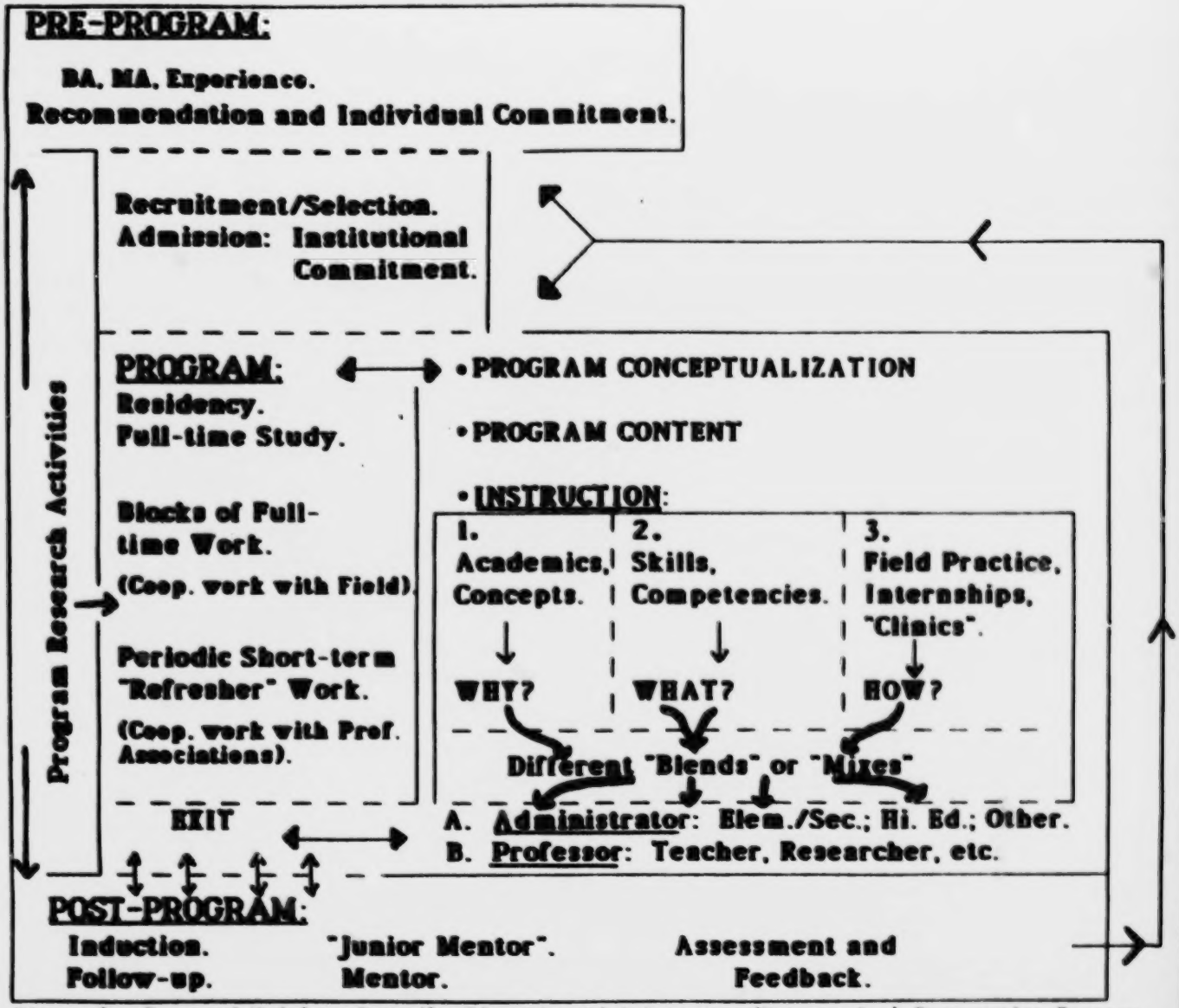

Figure 3. Proposed Model to Describe Education Administrator (Pre-service) Preparation Program. (Note that program development and delivery must be conceptualized within a theoretic framework that will allow testing and evaluation.)

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